Open the aperture of your awareness...

See the bigger picture...

Feel lighter

The Open Awareness techniques have been developed by

Jevon Dängeli
MSc Transpersonal Psychology,
Certified Transpersonal Coach &
Holistic NLP Trainer

authentic-self-empowerment.com/oa
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .................................................................................................................. 3

Introduction to Open Awareness .......................................................................................... 4

Open Awareness – why & how? ......................................................................................... 5

Hope for Digital Zombies .................................................................................................. 8

The Open Awareness Holarchy .......................................................................................... 13

Open Awareness techniques ............................................................................................... 19

Walking in Open Awareness exercises .............................................................................. 25

Open Awareness in coaching and therapy .......................................................................... 27

Eliminating Panic Attacks & Performance Anxiety with OA ............................................. 29

Emotionally Intelligent Self Leadership through OA ......................................................... 31

How to deal with difficult people and improve your relationships .................................... 32

The OA remedy for stress and burnout ............................................................................. 34

Open Awareness for preventing and recovering from burnout .......................................... 39

Mindfulness, bodyfulness and open awareness ................................................................. 42

Last words .......................................................................................................................... 45

About the author - Jevon Dängeli .................................................................................... 50
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my beloved wife, Jana, for her unconditional love and support, and for editing this handbook.

Special thanks to Dr Hennie Geldenhuys (Open Awareness Trainer) for his valuable reflections and feedback while developing and refining the Open Awareness techniques.

The skills and processes introduced in this handbook are among those that are taught at the live Open Awareness weekend events and in the online Open Awareness training.
Introduction to Open Awareness

Open Awareness (OA) is a mindful mode of perception accompanied by a calm and receptive state.

OA cultivates metacognitive introspective awareness – in which the mind can observe its own state and activities – an awareness of the mind itself.

OA enhances extrospective awareness – sensory perceptions and bodily sensations.

OA reframes one’s current experience of self, placing phenomena within one’s awareness, as opposed to these being experienced separate from oneself. This calms the mind, relaxes the body and promotes a sense of interconnection with the rest of life.

OA can be visually represented through the image of a zen circle (Ensō), depicting the connection between inner and outer through the open space in the circle - which is itself representative of both cyclical movement and infinity.
Open Awareness – why & how?

*We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.*

– Albert Einstein –

A majority of my clients (in *coaching* and *therapy*) have suffered from the symptoms of stress, anxiety and burnout. In listening to how most of these clients have described their personal issues in their most challenging contexts, I consistently detected a particular pattern that was almost always present. After a careful and long-term assessment, I established that this pattern played a crucial role in how these individuals were being negatively affected. The discovery was that this pattern involved a particular way in which these individuals focused on their situations or how they were focusing on a specific object of reference in the challenging context. This focus was always narrowly fixated, thus these individuals were usually unaware of what else was possible or achievable in those situations or contexts. Even if they were aware of other possibilities, their locked in ways of approaching the situation prevented them from establishing more resourceful perceptions and responses. In one sense, their problems remained problems largely because of *tunnel awareness*.

Through learning and integrating *open awareness*, these individuals have (to varying degrees) been able to shift their perception of themselves in relation to the challenging situation. This was brought about through the establishment of a more expanded sense of self from where the issue could be seen and approached from a more holistic perspective. The experimental process that I used in these sessions (which has become the open awareness technique) would then include guiding the client to embody their broader perspective and from that expanded as well as interconnected sense of self, address the stressful situation as or if required.

Over the past several years, people have reported that open awareness not only enables them to deal with stressful situations more resourcefully, but they are able to establish a calm and mindful state with relative ease, as well as sleep better, concentrate for longer and overcome mental blocks. Additionally, through becoming less identified with a limiting self-concept, they are less controlled by negative thoughts and reactions. Those who have integrated open awareness through practicing it regularly have told me that they feel a deep sense of connection with other individuals. Some speak of an enhanced connection with nature and the spiritual realm, while others refer more to a sense of oneness in which there is no real separation between self and other (or between subject and object). With this comes inner peace and meaning in life.
The history of Open Awareness (OA)

OA is a particular mode of perception in which individuals are attentive to both their own thoughts and feelings as well as those of others, including the context that connects them. It is a type of attention that is close to being simultaneously inward and outward focused, thereby making one more conscious of the interrelatedness of phenomena. The earliest tracings of open awareness appear to stem from Buddhist origins (Gunaratana, 1996) and it was possibly first introduced in the West through the teachings of George Ivanovich Gurdjieff in the early nineteen hundreds (Ouspensky, 1971). These days, aspects of open awareness have been integrated into some of the techniques of NLP (Bandler & Grinder, 1976; Overdurf, 2013) and other psychological interventions, although it has received only nominal attention from the scientific community (E.G., Farb, et al. 2007, Hanson, 2011).

Opening the aperture of awareness

OA involves the intentional observation of one’s thoughts, feelings and sensory perceptions in the present through opening the aperture of one’s awareness. This type of opening is facilitated by means of expanding one’s mode of perception to include the aspects of each unfolding experience that usually occur in or beyond the outskirts of conscious awareness and which are therefore usually unconscious or disregarded. In addition to identifying the subtleties of one’s internal experience, open awareness includes becoming receptive to the energetic and relational links between oneself and others and the environment. Depending on the individual and their reason for practicing open awareness, the experience of self fluctuates and is therefore not an ultimate state, but rather one in which the individual experiences a felt sense of expansiveness and interconnection resulting from dis-identification from their limited self-concept. Open awareness is more than a technique, it is a natural mode of being, one that we, as humans, find ourselves in when we are completely free of burdens on every level – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual (Finlay 2013).
Escaping the trap of tunnel awareness

The recent work of Olpin and Hesson (2015) suggests that stress is proliferating, with more people being negatively affected by it today than ever before. This points to the probability that we, as a society in general, are far from being free of burdens, which in turn may underlie why open awareness has become a largely forgotten trait or ability. Indeed, in an attempt to deal with the new or intensified types of challenges that the predominantly high-tech and fast-paced lifestyles of today demand, we are, to a certain degree, being forced from open awareness into tunnel awareness in order to fulfil many of our functions in the workforce. A potential resulting effect on us as a collective may be that we have become tuned out of what was, in past times, a more common state for us, in exchange for being tuned in to the devices that many believe make life convenient in this era. Society has never before had the technical means to capture and narrow our attention, as it does today. With our online digital devices readily on hand, the media and the medium have merged, and the result is, to some extent, that we have become the victims of attention slavery (Digital Zombies).

With our attention locked in by the gadgets (predominantly smart phones and tablet computers) that we have become accustomed to use in order to operate in this world, we may find ourselves unable or less able to release our attention when appropriate in order to relate with each other and our environment in ethical ways. The result may be a rise in inter human, relational and personal problems, as well as elevated stress levels, which if unresolved can lead to burnout (Brühlmann, 2011; Cartwright & Cooper, 1996). This phenomenon may in turn further convince one to retreat into a virtual world and to favour interacting with virtual friends for the sake of convenience, quick fixes and immediate gratification. This hypothesis suggests that as an increasing amount of the world’s human population becomes more tuned into a virtual reality, our ability to tune back out into the rest of reality may become jeopardised. In a mode of tunnel awareness, one may be less able to think creatively and deal with life’s stressors resourcefully (Farb, et al. 2007; Finlay 2013; Hanson, 2011; Overdurf, 2013; Rossi, 1993; Ouspensky, 1971). On the other hand, if one is able to counteract such a narrowing of awareness, through applying a means to reopen one’s mode of perception, then one may find that one is better equipped to navigate the multi-dimensional challenges of life beyond the flat screens of our electronic devices (ibid.)

References at end
Hope for Digital Zombies

Society’s reliance on mobile digital devices is developing a collective *tunnel awareness* (Digital Zombies) - amplifying the illusion of separateness and the pervasive problems associated with that. Unity through social media is not a healthy form of oneness! My hypothesis is that by introducing *open awareness* in learning environments and in the work place, the harmful effects of a narrowed awareness (including communication issues, chronic stress problems and burnout) can be prevented.

This section of the OA handbook includes content from my presentation at the International Transpersonal Conference in Prague in 2017, where he posited the potential value of open awareness skills in the digital age of today.

Digital Zombies on the rise!

A *Digital Zombie* is a person using digital technology and/or social media to a point that they become fixated in an artificial reality. They have difficulty looking people in the eye or carrying on healthy conversations. They are less aware of life happening around them (tunnel awareness) and they have limited social skills in the real world. They are prone to an early onset dementia, known as “Digital Dementia” [2,3,4,5].
The Smartphone Dark Side

Neuroscientist, Manfred Spitzer argues:

- Digital technology lowers the grades of school children most who already struggle academically \(^3\).
- More screen time means more psychological distress and depression \(^5\).
- Depressed people are more depressed after using social media \(^3\).
- Quitting social media for a week improves social life satisfaction \(^3\).
- Excessive screen use deteriorates one’s ability to empathise \(^3\).
- Smartphones present serious risks and side effects in terms of health, education and social life \(^3\).
Dangers of the Digital Matrix

The more time we spend looking at screens, the more likely we are to experience psychological distress and depression \(^5\).

Excessive use of mobile digital devices and smartphones can potentially hardwire tunnel awareness (TA) in children and adults, with detrimental consequences regarding health, performance and relationships.

TA may be an underlying cause of the sense of separateness between individuals, religious, ethnic groups, etc. It narrows our perceptions and capacity to think, feel and behave holistically.

Tunnel awareness is associated with:

- Scattered thoughts and brain fog \(^7\).
- Poor concentration \(^3,4\).
- Short attention span \(^3,4\)
- Learning disabilities \(^3,4\)
- Long-term memory problems \(^3,4\)
- Prolonged fight-or-flight response \(^1\)
- TA tells your brain to be on the lookout \(^4,5\) – thus problems with sleep. Even counting sheep is TA!
Open Awareness to the Rescue

OA has been found to counteracts stress by activating the body’s relaxation response. [1,7]

Shifting out of TA into OA can be achieved by people of any age using the simple OA techniques. OA can prevent the harmful effects of tunnel awareness in schools and at work.

By introducing OA techniques in learning environments and in the work place, the harmful effects of tunnel awareness can be prevented.

The broader perspectives and resourceful states that OA cultivates can help people to resolve the complex challenges of life beyond the flat screens of their digital devices.

OA cultivates mindful resourcefulness.

OA optimises the interaction between attention and peripheral awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attention</th>
<th>Peripheral awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isolates and analyses experience</td>
<td>Observant from a holistic and contextual perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More processing, slower response</td>
<td>Less processing, quicker response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selects information from awareness</td>
<td>Filters incoming information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow, fixated, singular</td>
<td>Open, receptive, interconnected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal ‘self’ centred</td>
<td>Self-other-relationship-context centred (objectivity)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from The Mind Illuminated [7]
References

The Open Awareness Holarchy

Open Awareness is a flowing moment of pure experience interconnected with the rest of reality – a Holarchy!

The OA Holarchy is a holistic system of interrelated states, perspectives and dimensions — that provides a theory of how the body, mind and spirit are connected.
A holarchy is a system composed of interrelated and interacting holons

A holon is something that is simultaneously a whole and a part of a larger whole (Koestler, A. 1967). Holons are influenced by and influence larger wholes. Similarly, since a holon is comprised of parts, it is also influenced by and influences these parts. When energy or information flow between holons within a system is compromised, for any reason, the system begins to break down. For example, wholes might not recognize their dependence on the individual parts that they are comprised of, or parts might not recognize the larger holarchy in which they co-exist (Ibid). Cancer may be understood as such a breakdown within the body. Conflicts can arise because of such breakdowns in communication. Crises ensue when such breakdowns occur in one’s psyche.

The technique of open awareness (OA) promotes the embodied actualisation of oneself (and of everyone) as interconnected holons within larger holarchies. To put it simply, we are all part of larger (collective and transpersonal) realities. These larger realities exist because each of us exists. An individual’s personal reality is influenced by the state of the collective and transpersonal realities. Similarly, each individual’s present state influences the overall state of the collective and transpersonal realities. Very simply, OA makes one more aware of their wholeness.

The three core dimensions (holons) of the OA Holarchy include:

**Personal (embodied)**
Typical states and perspectives: somatic awareness, hindsight, insight, foresight

**Interpersonal (relational)**
Typical states and perspectives: interconnection, empathy, compassion, participatory perspective

**Transpersonal (spiritual)**
Typical states and perspectives: peak states, transpersonal perspective, causal awareness, non-dual awareness

**Characteristics of the OA experience**

The following paragraphs briefly describe the typical states and/or perspectives (each one being a holon) that have been found to be associated with open awareness, as depicted in the OA Holarchy image above.
Somatic awareness

When beginning to practice OA, you may start by focusing your attention within the body, e.g., the feeling of the breath flowing into and out of the abdominal area. Through keeping the feeling of the breath in awareness, but simultaneously expanding your field of awareness to include the entire body, somatic awareness (awareness of sensations, emotional feelings and the overall state of the body) becomes enhanced.

Hindsight

With somatic awareness in a heightened state, you can more easily track specific sensations in the body or emotional feelings back to their ‘roots’. One can also elicit from the sensations, emotional feelings, or one’s overall state, what is required by the body in terms of health and healing outcomes.

Insight

OA quietens the inner ‘chatter box’ or ‘monkey mind’ and induces a state of calm mindfulness. From this state insights often arise, especially when one is seeking a solution to a problem, or wanting to increase the probability of gaining creative inspiration.

Foresight

With a quiet and present (and timeless) state of mind, sometimes realisations come into conscious awareness that pertain to potential experiences in your near or distant future. Such foresights can serve as warnings and provide motivation to take certain actions. OA also equips you to more effectively visualise the outcomes that you would like to bring about in your future, thereby enhancing the possibility of achieving those outcomes.

Interconnection

OA promotes an expanded sense of self, in which you can experience a deep sense of everyone and everything being interconnected. Quantum physics and most major spiritual systems support this possibility. The universe can be viewed as a dynamic holarchy of interrelated holons, of which you are one. None of the properties of the holarchy are fundamental. They all follow from properties of the other holons and the overall consistency of their interrelations determines the structure of the entire holarchy.
Empathy

With a deep sense of everyone and everything being interconnected, empathy toward others flows naturally and effortlessly. You find yourself relating to people meaningfully, identifying their needs and values, as well as being able to truly hear and accept them without preconceived judgement.

Compassion

As your sense of connection with yourself and between you and others continues to deepen, compassion arises. For example, you may identify and feel how somebody is suffering, and you typically find yourself approaching them with more care and kindness.

Participatory perspective

Emerging from a deep realisation of your connection with everyone and everything, comes the participatory perspective. This view reveals the cocreative quality of all events – from material to abstract and from personal to transpersonal.

Transpersonal Psychologist, Dr. Jorge Ferrer is well respected for his Participatory Vision of Spirituality. In his 2011 article, Ferrer writes: “...the participatory approach holds that human spirituality emerges from our cocreative participation in a dynamic and undetermined mystery or generative power of life, the cosmos, and/or the spirit” (p 2). He suggests that spiritual cocreation has three interrelated dimensions—intrapsychic, interpersonal, and transpersonal. These dimensions respectively establish participatory spirituality as “embodied (spirit within), relational (spirit in-between), and enactive (spirit beyond)” (p 3). Ferrer’s theory provides a significant rationale for the OA holarchy model.

Peak states

Feelings of aliveness, joy, bliss and flow describe the peak states of consciousness that can spontaneously arise from an unconditional open awareness. You feel aligned within yourself and simultaneously connected to a vast and exquisite reality. Everything has meaning and value in such states. They are profoundly inspiring and can be transformative.

Transpersonal perspective

*Transpersonal* can be defined as “experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, psyche or cosmos” (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993). It has also been described as “development beyond conventional, personal or individual levels” (Scotton, 1996). OA promotes a transpersonal perspective through expanding your sense of self beyond ego, integrating a more transcendent and holistic identity.
Causal Awareness

A transpersonal perspective involves becoming more aware of the causes of your present life circumstances: personality traits, behaviours, health, relationships (including how you relate to money), occupation, as well as your level of fulfilment, happiness, wellbeing, etc. The transpersonal realm can be thought of as the world of causes, and the material realm (your physical life) is the world of effects. Thoughts and emotions precede manifestation in the material realm, but what causes us to think and feel the way we do? With causal awareness you become more capable of tapping into the preconscious realm. This enables you to not only become more aware of what causes you to think, feel and behave the way you do, but also equips you to be a more conscious co-creator of your life circumstances.

Non-dual awareness

Non-dual means “not two”. This primordial state can be thought of as a highly developed state of consciousness, in which the dichotomy of I-other (subject-object) is transcended. In non-dual awareness the ego dissolves temporarily and the experience has been described as “pure openness”, “pure consciousness” and “pure being” (Fenner, 2011). Glimpses of non-dual awareness can spontaneously occur through being in open awareness, however, it is more commonly the result of prolonged meditation and contemplative practice. None the less, OA itself can serve as a simple yet effective meditation and contemplative practice (E.G., Dangeli, 2015 and Whenary, 2012).

A theory for how the body, mind and spirit are connected

The three dimensions of the OA Holarchy are each holons with subsidiary holons (expressed in terms of states and perspectives – as outlined above). These are all connected along a metaphorical spiraling continuum, rather than separate levels (as you can see in the diagram above). The spiral depicts the flow of immanent consciousness (bottom-up) and transcendent consciousness (top-down) as simultaneous throughout the holarchy. Seen through a cartesian lens, transcendent consciousness flows downward or inward from transpersonal to personal. Likewise, immanent consciousness flows upward or outward from personal to transpersonal. Looked at from a participatory perspective, both transcendent and immanent consciousness can stem from various co-arising sources along the spiraling continuum. As open awareness develops, eventually the concepts of inner and outer, as well as upper and lower lose significance. Ultimately, according to this model, we are all unique and autonomous expressions of the ‘Whole’. While undefinable in common language, the Whole might be described as both the source and the subject of everything in existence.
What does this mean to you?

Through practicing OA, one’s consciousness becomes both ‘embodied’ and ‘expanded’ at the same time. This has potential healing, transformative and heuristic value; being the kinds of outcomes that my clients and course participants have reported since 2004, and which was evident in the research results documented in my dissertation (Dangeli, 2015).

In a nutshell, OA could be described as the process of bringing awareness into the ‘space’ in between yourself and that which you are experiencing in the moment (person, object, sensory perception, thought or feeling). As OA deepens, your experience of this space expands, the subject/object divide dissolves, and you become more aware of the subtler realms, including preconscious content.

Through practicing OA you learn to become comfortable with the unknown. You discover how to tap into the realm beyond your conscious awareness to lead a more productive and fulfilling life, or, perhaps most fundamentally, as Ferrer (2011) puts it: “participate more fully in the mystery out of which everything arises” (22).

OA weekend events and online training are available. OA is a fundamental approach taught in the Authentic Self Empowerment Facilitator Training and it is a central aspect of the Transpersonal Coach Model.

References:


Open Awareness techniques

Introduction to the basic OA technique

Open awareness is a particular mode of perception that can be established through various means. These means generally begin by identifying one’s present experience of self, by first focusing attention through the senses, then noticing thoughts and emotions, and then bringing awareness to the context or relationship that allows for one’s current experience.

OA could be described as the process of bringing attention into the space in between yourself and that which you are experiencing in the moment (object, sensory perception, thought or feeling). As OA deepens, your experience of this space expands, the subject/object divide dissolves, and the more subtle realms come into awareness.

When learning the skill for the first time, it is useful to first focus on the more apparent experiences and then progress to the more subtle experiences that occur to one in the present. Most often the process begins through focusing either on the visual, or auditory, or somatic experiences as they unfold moment to moment. One of these three sensory modalities is selected and paid attention to, then that particular sensory field is extended to include more of what is occurring in the background. This process continues as a steady progression until the periphery of that sensory field is extended as far as it can naturally and effortlessly go.

While this extending of awareness is imagined and therefore subjective, the object here is not to pretend that one is having any particular kind of experience, but rather to prime one’s consciousness in order to bring forth more of what is present in the background of awareness. In this manner, one’s awareness can continue expanding toward the extremities of space and time until eventually there is no identification with any form at all.

Although one’s experience at any stage or level remains subjective, the process of establishing open awareness (as outlined above) can have a profoundly healing or transformative effect on the individual. After extending the awareness outward, it is embodied in the physical form once again through re-focusing awareness back into the abdominal area. In this way, insights arising from the
expanded mind become integrated in order for inspired ideas, or solutions to problems, or empowered states to be present – as and when required.

It should be noted that this kind of consciously chosen starting point followed by a progressive extending of the awareness, which denotes a separate interior and exterior to the individual, is only one means of establishing open awareness. After some practice people are able to “drop into” OA at the mere intention to do so. What is dropped into is a calm state where one experiences oneself as fundamentally interconnected with the rest of life, which in turn cultivates resourcefulness and compassion.

The skill of OA may well be a practical antidote to the attention slavery that we are all subject to. Dissolve stressful thoughts and enhance mental performance with one simple skill – opening the aperture of your awareness.

Varieties of Open Awareness

As the above article suggests, open awareness can be established through a variety of means. These include combinations of visual, auditory and somatic approaches – which are used as starting points in order to establish the multi-sensory experience of OA – which can then be extended to include more subtle (e.g. psychic and spiritual) experiences and even a sense of interconnectivity with everything in existence. These various starting points are there so that open awareness can be achieved by all sorts of people. In this way the skill of OA can be easily learned and taught. The following are examples of the three common starting points to achieving OA.

Open vision:

Fixate your gaze on any object and then gradually broaden your visual field to include more and more of what is completely to the left and right of your visual field of awareness. It should be noted that the objects in your periphery do remain out of focus and therefore somewhat hazy. The object is not to try and see more, but rather to allow your visual field to include what is over in both the extremities of your visual field, on the left and right simultaneously.

Open hearing:

Close your eyes and pay attention to what you hear going on in the environment around you. Progressively include more attention to the sounds that are further away. Then bring the idea into awareness that you are only able to hear the sounds around you and far away due to the fact that your awareness has extended out to those points. In other words, you hear those sounds occurring within your awareness, therefore you can experience the sources of those sounds (near and far) within you (to some degree). If, for example, a helicopter passes by, you hear that sound within your awareness and as such your awareness can be experienced as extended in all directions as far as that helicopter (which then draws your attention further out as it flies further away). Allow yourself to experience your extended awareness such that it is not merely your auditory sense detecting sounds from afar, but rather your sense of self that has extended so that what was experienced far outside of you is now experienced within ‘you’.
Open soma awareness:

Start by focussing on the rising and releasing of the belly with each inhalation and exhalation. Next, extend the rising and releasing experience to include your entire torso for a few breaths and then the entire body. After experiencing the rising and releasing of the entire body for a few breaths, as if the entire body was breathing, you then extend your awareness to surround your body (like a permeable cocoon) while being aware of how the body feels at the same time. The breathing entity is then felt as both the body and the field of awareness that surrounds it. This breathing field of awareness is then extended progressively with each inhalation, until it includes other people and objects in your immediate environment. Following that, you can extend the awareness to include people and objects that are anywhere at any time (past, present or future).

Notes:

• Once open awareness has been established, you will have activated alpha brain waves and be more in touch with your unconscious resources.

• The above three starting point examples can be blended to enrich the experience. It is not necessary to extend open awareness further than what is required in order to achieve your desired result.

• Those beginning to learn open awareness usually experience it as a trance like state, however your conscious awareness remains fully present throughout the process. Once familiar with open awareness, it is experienced more as mindfulness (relaxed but highly alert and with a sense of interconnectivity) which then enables you to activate and utilise it in all contexts.

• The establishment of open awareness should precede all other psychological interventions and can be utilised as a means of intervention by itself (i.e., to neutralise negative triggers).

• Psychology practitioners (including coaches, therapists and counsellors) should always calibrate carefully to their client’s present state, as this provides the feedback which determines the pace of the process and the extent to which it should go. Always make sure that the client is comfortable and benefitting from the process.

• After practicing open awareness, return to your original object of attention and ensure that you feel reorientated (body centred) before continuing with your normal activities.
1. OA technique - general approach 1:
Keep your head facing forward and eyes open throughout the following 6 steps.

1. Extend your visual field of awareness as far as possible to the left and right simultaneously.
2. Sense the entire volume of space that your whole body occupies.
3. Notice the pauses or space between your breaths (continue for at least 30 seconds).
4. Identify the pauses or space between your thoughts (continue for at least 30 seconds).
5. Become aware of the space out of which everything you experience emerges.
6. Experience the space that connects you to everyone and everything in existence.

End by focusing on your breath for at least 30 seconds.

2. OA technique - general approach 2:
Keep your head facing forward and eyes open throughout the following 6 steps.

1. Extend your visual field of awareness as far as possible to the left and right simultaneously.
2. Expand your field of awareness all around you and sense the entire volume of space that your whole body occupies.
3. Notice the pauses or space between your breaths (continue for at least 30 seconds).
4. Bring awareness into the space between you, all people and everything in the area.
5. Notice how your breath connects you to the unlimited and unifying space that we all share.
6. Observe your moment to moment experience from the perspective of space itself.

End by focusing on your breath for at least 30 seconds.
3. OA for solving problems

**Setup:** Think about a situation in which you are experiencing a problem. After considering that, take a big breath in and out to clear your mind. If that situation could be completely resolved, what would be your desired outcome? With that outcome in mind...

1. Start by completing one of the OA general approaches from above.
2. Imagine that you can look down at yourself in that situation from high up and far away. Get the big picture! Notice how your current experience fits into the greater scheme of things.
3. From this point of view what can you learn? How many more options do you have? What can you do differently?
4. Now, with your new understanding and perspective in awareness, what is the next smallest step that you can take which leads toward your desired outcome?
5. Imagine taking that next step and feeling good about it.
6. Take a few deep breaths, open your eyes and look forward to fulfilling results.

4. OA for creative inspiration and core empowerment

**Setup:** We’ve all had the experience of eventually overcoming what used to be a problem. “Time heals” - therefore it is probable that in the future we will overcome our current challenges. The following process entails the creative visualization of going to the future, connecting with relevant learnings and understanding, then bringing those new insights and perspectives back to the present! This is a fun and empowering process...

1. Bring your challenging situation into awareness.
2. How are you experiencing this issue right now?
3. After considering that, take a big breath in and out to clear your mind.
4. Before continuing to step 5, complete one of the OA general approaches from above.
5. Now imagine your awareness floating out into the future... all the way to the point where you’ve outgrown that issue and become totally resourceful.
6. Imagine being in this future now. Become aware of the learnings, insights and resources that are available to you in your future.
7. Look back from your future toward your present and notice how your current situation is unfolding in order for you to move toward the future that awaits you.
8. Now... what’s the next smallest step that you can take which leads toward your desired outcome?
9. Imagine taking that next step and feeling good about it.
10. Take a few deep breaths, open your eyes and look forward to fulfilling results.
5. ‘Holding The Space’ - for coaches, therapists, managers, teachers, presenters and parents

1. Start by focussing on the space between you and the other(s).
2. Access peripheral vision (180 degrees left and right).
3. Expand your field of awareness all around you and the other(s).
4. Sense the entire volume of space that your whole awareness occupies.
5. Notice how everything that you experience, including the other(s), is within the extended space of your awareness.
6. Have the intention to embrace and gently hold the other(s) within the space of your expanded awareness.
7. Bring into the space your intention to be of unconditional support and service to the other(s) who are being held in your open awareness.

End by focussing on your breath for at least 30 seconds.
Walking in Open Awareness exercises

The following four exercises may be more effective when done in a natural environment, as opposed to an urban area.

1. Basic exercise:

While walking, allow your attention to be drawn to whatever passes in the periphery of your visual field. Naturally you will also be aware of what’s ahead of you and where you are placing your feet, however, this should not be the main focus of your attention. There's nothing specific to focus on, simply pay attention to whatever it is that passes by in both the left and right of your visual field. Do this for 5 minutes and notice the effect on your present state.

2. Activating unconscious resources and/or overcoming mental blocks exercise:

- Before beginning your walk, pause and reflect on the issue where you require a solution.

- Then clear that thought and decide by when you expect to have the solution, for example after 5 minutes of walking or by the time you reach your chosen destination.

- Clear your mind again and begin walking in open awareness. Should your mind drift, bring your attention back to whatever it is that passes by in both the left and right of your visual field.

- Upon arrival at your destination, or after more or less your given time frame, pause and hold the intention for your solution to arise into conscious awareness. Perhaps you will get the 'perfect answer' or perhaps the answer will be a practical small step that moves you toward your desired outcome. You might need to extend your destination or time frame in the event that no solution comes to mind.

Keep going until you have at least some degree of inspiration or a solution.
3. Resolving relationship issues:

1. Bring the person to mind with whom you have a relationship issue that you would like to resolve.

2. Hold a soft representation of that individual in front of you and begin walking – while keeping your attention on whatever it is that passes by in both the left and right of your visual field.

3. While almost all of your attention should remain in your periphery, as you walk, notice any changes in the representation of the person that you have in mind, or changes in the way you feel toward him/her.

4. Keep going until you are satisfied with the new way in which you are perceiving that person, or a satisfying idea has come to mind in regard to how you want to approach the relationship issue.

4. Walking meditation:

1. Before beginning, take a few comforting breaths and then establish open awareness.

2. Begin walking mindfully (slowly and attentively) – aware of each muscular movement that propels your body forward, aware of passing thoughts and feelings, aware of your passing environment, aware of the degree to which you are in open awareness (or not) – all with effortlessness.

3. If you are distracted, pause your walking, return to open awareness, and continue as above.

The walking meditation is recommended to be done at least once daily for a minimum of five minutes. 20 – 30 minutes is ideal (and longer is fine too).
Open Awareness in coaching and therapy

OA is more than a technique, it is a natural mode of being, one that we, as humans, find ourselves in when we are completely free of burdens on every level – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual (Finlay, 2013)

Research suggests (Dangeli, 2015) that through the practice of OA, we can deal more resourcefully with stress, prevent burnout, enhance resilience, improve mental performance and establish a positive flow in one’s endeavours. As insights from the expanded and interconnected mind become embodied, inspired ideas, solutions to problems and empowered states are revealed.

When our focus on a situation or on a specific object of reference in a challenging context is narrowly fixated, we are usually unaware of what else is possible or achievable in those situations or contexts. Through learning and integrating OA, we can change the way that we focus so that we are able to access a more expanded sense of self – which in turn enables us to approach challenges from a more holistic perspective. Stress is reduced and mental performance is enhanced.

By entering a state of OA, we are able to relax more easily, escape tunnel awareness and quieten our self talk or inner critic, become more intuitive, experience more acute sensory awareness so that we can be more aware of subtleties in unconscious communication, and we can develop an enhanced ability to detect state changes in others as we feel the changes in ourselves.

As the coach or therapist, we pay attention to everything when we’re working with our clients. Being in OA, with all the valuable benefits that come with the skill, we are able to develop rapport naturally and rapidly, with the result that we are able to help someone to advance in their thinking, or to overcome obstacles, sometimes without needing to use any of the other psychological techniques.

Teaching clients how to establish OA, and how to integrate it into their daily lives, can be profoundly healing or transformative for individuals, as well as groups. The OA state can be anchored in order for it to be available anywhere and anytime. One simple way of doing so, for example, is by taking a long and slow breath into the abdominal area while in OA, and repeating this exercise a few times. Then, in situations where you would like to access OA, you simply do the same long and slow breath to trigger OA.

When our focus on a situation or on a specific object of reference in a challenging context is narrowly fixated (tunnel awareness), we are usually unaware of what else is possible or achievable in those situations or contexts. Learning how to establish OA, and how to integrate it into our daily lives allows us to change the quality of our attention. It helps us to access a more expanded sense of ourselves and, from that broader perspective, an issue can be approached more holistically. When we understand more clearly why we think, feel and behave the way we
do, our mental performance becomes enhanced, we become less reactive and more self-actualised.

Often, when we find ourselves stuck in a problem, it’s just because we are unaware of solutions that exist outside our field of awareness. This is because we’re viewing the situation from a narrow perspective – tunnel awareness. If we can keep changing our point of view and seeing the situation from as many perspectives as possible, sooner or later the situation will disappear as a problem and take on a new meaning. When an issue can be seen differently, we can think about it differently and then respond to it differently. OA positively changes the way we see and interpret things. Furthermore, OA offers us a heightened state of receptivity and, with our self-talk or inner critic silenced, we become more intuitive. Trusting our intuition can deliver positive results in all areas of our lives.

With OA there is no final point, instead there is an increasing conscious awareness of what was previously unconscious. Enlightening and empowering states of consciousness can be accessed and then used in meaningful and productive ways. OA states motivate us to take resourceful actions that serve our best interests, while maintaining compassion for the welfare of others and the environment. The establishment and maintenance of mindful resilience is a natural aspect of OA.

In summary, OA is the process of establishing broader perspectives and then enabling our actions to be inspired by an expanded sense of self that sees the ‘bigger picture’.

Over the past several years, my clients and course participants have reported that open awareness not only enables them to deal with stressful situations more resourcefully, but they are able to establish a calm and mindful state with relative ease, sleep better, concentrate for longer and overcome mental blocks. Additionally, through becoming less identified with a limiting self-concept, they are less controlled by negative thoughts and reactions. With this comes inner peace and meaning in life.

OA weekend events and online training are available. OA is a fundamental approach taught in the Authentic Self Empowerment Facilitator Training and it is a central aspect of the Transpersonal Coach Model.
Eliminating Panic Attacks & Performance Anxiety with OA

Be free of panic attacks and performance anxiety with this simple 2-step technique...

STEP 1: Open the aperture of your awareness

Broaden your current perspective in order to see the bigger picture and experience an expanded sense of self. For this, either of the two general OA techniques (outlined on page 22) should suffice.

For panic attacks or performance anxiety to occur, you need to keep your attention on something that causes you to have the unwanted thoughts and feelings. In such cases attention is fixated (tunnel awareness) either on the undesired aspect of the situation that’s unfolding, or the negative self talk that’s running in our mind, or both. In both scenarios, the skill of open awareness immediately inhibits the body’s stress mode (fight or flight) and calms the mind.

By practicing the OA techniques regularly (at least once per day for a week), you will begin to find that you can drop into the state of open awareness quite swiftly and effortlessly. The more you practice it, the more it becomes your natural reflex in challenging situations (which is when you need it most).
STEP 2: Roll out the red carpet

Welcome each and every aspect of your current experience as it is. What we resist persists, so make sure that you are not resisting anything. I know it sounds crazy to welcome panic or anxiety, but trust me, this works! You simply imagine rolling out a red carpet and wholeheartedly welcome your experience like a VIP guest. Whatever symptom you are experiencing, let it be, welcome it! Doing this drains the energy from panic attacks and performance anxiety.

IMPORTANT:

Open awareness goes hand-in-hand with the red carpet skill/attitude. If you are in tunnel awareness then the red carpet metaphor might not be as effective.

Open awareness must be practiced in order for it to become embodied. Only once it is embodied does it become easy to apply in times of need. In each practice session first establish open awareness and then add in the red carpet metaphor (and make each practice session fun and light-hearted). Sooner or later you may find that what used to trigger those old panicky feelings begins to lose its grip on you, since your unconscious mind knows that you can easily deal with those triggers should they show up.

Summary

STEP 1: Open the aperture of your awareness
Establish open awareness.

STEP 2: Roll out the red carpet
Welcome your experience like a VIP guest.

You might be surprised at how well this simple 2-step technique can work for you. It’s safe, effective and fun!

Note: Sometimes panic attacks or performance anxiety occur as a result of severe traumatic events in one’s past, for which there are additional steps required to heal the ‘root cause’. If you feel that your level of panic or anxiety is too intense to take care of yourself, then consider a private consultation with Jevon (via Skype).

Related article: To read about how Jevon used a technique like the one above to save his own life in a medical crisis, read here.
Emotionally Intelligent Self Leadership through OA

What’s the wisdom of your body telling you right now?

When you find yourself feeling distress or wanting to react to “negative” emotions - close your eyes, take a few deep breaths and feel the sensations in your body. Shift your attention off your thought-stream and avoid labelling the feeling or emotion, just observe your direct experience of it.

While feeling the sensations in your body, simultaneously become aware of your body as a whole. Expand your field of awareness all around you and sense the entire volume of space that your whole body occupies. In this way you allow any unwanted energy to pass instead of boxing it, or trapping it through attempts to resist or suppress it.

Welcome emotional feelings and their lessons. Be mindful of any need to react, but avoid the temptation of knee-jerk reactions or jumping to conclusions. Everything happens for a reason and the key to gaining a constructive learning out of your experience is through how it makes you feel. You will know you’ve got the learning when you feel better and that type of issue no longer recycles in your life.

Discipline yourself to only respond to a challenging situation once the unpleasant emotion has passed. The emotional state behind your behaviour is what influences your effectiveness and attracts more of the same.

In choosing to witness (through OA) our unpleasant feelings and reactive thoughts without identifying with them, we become less overwhelmed by them and more aware of our unconscious instincts. This awareness allows us to make more clear and conscious choices about each situation in our life.

Regular practice of this skill is a useful way of “tuning in” and becoming familiar with the inner workings of your higher intelligence.

This approach to dealing with the emotional challenges promotes Emotionally Intelligent Self Leadership – and all effective leadership begins with self-leadership.
How to deal with difficult people and improve your relationships

This article introduces ideas that can help to broaden your perspectives as well as shift perceptual positions, no matter how complicated your interaction with another may be. With a broader view and a multiple perception stand-point you will have greater freedom to choose mindful responses in any type of interaction with people.

You are the only one who is responsible for your happiness.

When we feel emotionally affected by someone it’s because something that already exists inside us was triggered by that person. When we deal with what’s inside us then we no longer get triggered in the same way. We then stop blaming others for doing things to us. We see that the way they are is a reflection of their level of awareness and this enables us to remain resourceful and compassionate toward them.

The only way other people, including your family and friends exist for you is through your perceptions. Our perceptions determine how we behave. Our behaviour influences the behaviour of those with whom we interact, which in turn influences our perception about them. And so the cycle goes... In other words, the way in which people behave validates our perception of them, and so we always get to be right. Therefore, our perceptions become self-fulfilling prophecies that keep recycling in our life.

Perceptions are subjective and therefore relationships can be seen as a process of intersubjective responses between people. Our perceptions of others (especially the important people in our life) often mirror the unconscious qualities of our own personality, which is what we’re not aware of in ourselves. In this sense we generally experience and judge others according to the internal representation of ourselves.

Problems occur in relationships when you get stuck in your point of view. When you refuse to see the situation from the other person’s perspective as well as from a more distant (observer) perspective, therefore only seeing it from your own map of reality, then conflicts are inevitable. Being able to shift perspectives between your position and another’s position and an observer position frees you from preconceived judgments toward others, which in turn fosters better communication, understanding, respect, compassion and harmony in that relationship. OA streamlines the process.

This doesn’t mean that you stick around in an unwanted or abusive relationship. It means that you become empowered to act from a broader perspective of what is really going on. You are able to choose what is in your best interest and move in that direction without resentment or negativity or any sense of loss.

You’re only responsible for your own thoughts, feelings and behaviours. When we try change other people’s thoughts, feelings and behaviours it often leads to disappointment and suffering. Changing your point of view (e.g., from tunnel awareness to OA) and therefore your ability to respond differently in a relationship is the best chance you have of having a happy, healthy and successful partnership.

Fulfilment in relationships means not depending on someone else. Fulfilment is the privilege of an open mind and flexible points of view (OA). When we realize that at a deep level we are interconnected not only with our loved ones, but also with everyone and everything in nature, then we begin to treat others the way we would like to be treated.
It’s important to take responsibility for your feelings and to articulate them. When describing your feelings, choose words that express what you are experiencing, as in “I feel sad, lonely, frustrated, jealous.” Avoid using words that reinforce your sense of victimization, such as “I feel neglected, rejected, betrayed.” Avoid judging others, you are informing them about your feelings, rather than blaming them for something that only you are responsible for anyway.

Practice the discipline of observing your internal reactions in relation to people with whom you’d like to interact more positively or resourcefully. This enables you to loosen your identification with thoughts like: “He shouldn’t have done that”; “She should be more understanding”; “Him saying that means he doesn’t care for me”; etc. Observing your thoughts in this way also enables you to more easily shift your attention away from limiting perceptions and identify with broader views that show you a greater truth. Look beyond the person whom you want to relate to better. Open the aperture of your awareness by focussing not only on the person that you’re communicating with, but also on the space around them, as well as the space (or energy) that connects you with that person. If you can’t see their entire body, then you might be too much ‘in their face’. Also, by broadening your perceptual field and softening your gaze, you are able to relate to the whole human being in front of you rather than just their title.

Implementing the ideas shared in this article will enable you to change your own perception so that you can experience others with greater equanimity. Taking this mindfulness approach toward the people in your life affords you the freedom to experience more fulfilling relationships.

Remember: You are the only one who is responsible for your happiness!
The OA remedy for stress and burnout

In this article I will comment on studies that indicate how mindfulness and meditation are related to resilience, self-regulation and purpose. Drawing on research as well as direct personal experience, I will suggest that mindfulness and meditation are valuable to programmes that aim to prevent as well as heal the effects of overwhelming stress and burnout.

Burnout is believed to result from unwavering and persistent stress (Cartwright & Cooper, 1996; Selye, 1950), therefore, since it is known to reduce stress, mindfulness is most likely helpful to alleviate burnout too and might even serve as a preventative measure. Burnout has been referred to as a ‘soul sickness’ (Wright, 2010, p 8.), where one reaches a point of being sick and tired of being sick and tired, but oblivious of any solution. A common aspect of burnout are dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours that are disengaged from the present moment (cited in Dierendonck, Garssen & Visser, 2005). This is similar to what (Brown & Ryan, 2003) describe as “mindlessness”, being the opposite of mindfulness, which they consider to be an open and active mental state that is engaged with experiences as they unfold in the moment.

Physician burnout specialist Doctor Dike Drummond (2012) refers to Burnout as a calling, calling for a change. The problem is that those headed for burnout and those already affected by it don’t hear that call because of their lack of mindfulness (present moment awareness). One reason for not paying attention to themselves is because soon to be or already burnt out people are usually pursuing external goals (often unsuccessfully) and are generally less concerned with their own internal needs, hence they become drained of energy and burn out. Unless helped, those with burnout will most likely continue to not hear the call and this can result in a downward spiralling of the burnout syndrome, making matters even worse.

Recent research (cited in González-Moralessa, G., et al. 2012) has demonstrated that the experience of burnout in organisations is contagious and it can be transferred from one employee to another. Katz et al. (2005) have found that mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) techniques have the potential to transform, not only individual relationships, but also the overall work environment, thus preventing burnout from spreading. Their data affirmed that MBSR is a useful intervention for helping to resolve old wounds and unresolved issues. This is an example of how mindfulness can address the cause of stress and burnout.
Mindfulness in relation to resilience

What is missing for many sufferers of stress and burnout is resilience – the ability to maintain “elasticity” and “buoyancy” (dictionary.com) in the face of adversity. In Jacobs, T. L., et al. (2011) resilience is referred to as a family of connected phenomena that enable one to adapt adequately in challenging situations. Siegel (2007) claims that mindfulness practice is scientifically proven to develop a long-term state of resilience by enhancing physical, mental, and social wellbeing. The integration of mindfulness practices is suggested by Meiklejohn et al. (2012) to enhance self-regulation of one’s emotions and focus of attention, whilst cultivating mental flexibility, which in turn promotes resilience. This is further confirmed by studies, which have shown that mindfulness is associated with resilience toward stress and burnout (Bonanno, 2004; Kelley, 2005; Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Irving, J. A., Dobkin, P. L., & Park, J., 2009; Cohen-Katz, Wiley, Capuano, Baker, & Shapiro, 2005; Mackenzie, Poulin, & Seidman-Carlson, 2006). Mindfulness has also been associated with the enhancement of well-being, since it is known to enable people to disengage from unhealthy, automatic behavioural patterns (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Their view is supported by Brown & Ryan’s (2003) research which indicates that higher levels of mindfulness are correlated with the lower level of stress and mood disturbance, and will therefore contribute to improving resilience.

Mindfulness in relation to self-regulation

Bonanno’s (2004) research suggests that all human beings with unhampered mental health have an innate capacity for resilience and well-being even while facing adversity (cited Kelley, T, 2005, p. 265). According to Ciarrochi, Chan, Caputi, and Roberts (2001), difficulty identifying feelings is likely to predispose an individual to poorer mental health. Various studies support the idea that an individual with a greater ability to identify their emotions will be able to regulate those emotions better (cited in Barrett, L. F., Gross, J., Christensen, T. C., & Benvenuto, M., 2001, p. 721). Inherent in mindfulness approaches is the ability to adapt and regulate one’s thought’s, feelings and actions according to the situation (Baliki, Ceha, Apkarian, & Chialvo, 2008; cited in Niemiec, Rashid, Spinella, 2012). Rather than perceiving mental and emotional states as fixed, the mindful approach identifies their impermanent nature and treats them as transitory phenomena (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2002). The mindful disposition does nonetheless require an ongoing initiative for which regular self-regulation practice in the form of meditation is recommended (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).
Mindfulness in relation to purpose

While meditation cultivates mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Jacobs, T. L., et al. (2011), research done by Jacobs, T. L., et al. also indicates that meditation is known to promote a sense of meaning and purpose in life (2011). Their study suggests that meditation may facilitate an expanded assessment of one’s life as meaningful, which in turn may influence one’s assessment of challenging situations, resulting in improved self regulation and enhanced resilience to stress. This idea is in alignment with former research verifying that the perception of meaning is associated with better stress management (e.g., Okamoto et al., 2007). Additional evidence shows that when stressful situations are infused with a purposeful meaning, the result is more adaptive stress responses and better psychological coping (e.g., Bower et al., 2008). The link between mindfulness and purpose may offer particular value to burnout treatment programmes, since burnout is associated with a deficit in existential meaning and purpose (Frankl, 1963; Längle, 1994). A central purpose in a person’s life is suggested to influence the thoughts, emotions, and actions of that person, as well as enhance that person’s resiliency in stressful situations (cited in McKnight & Kashdan, 2009). There are apparently similar outcomes when comparing approaches that are motivated by a strong sense of purpose and those of mindfulness in contrast to no sense of purpose or mindlessness. Comparing the research cited in McKnight & Kashdan (2009) on purpose with that cited in Malinowski (2008) on mindfulness; common outcomes appear to be: an improved ability to understand and cope with stress, enhanced resilience, more adaptable self regulation, as well as a generally elevated psychological, physical, and social well-being. In addition to considering the complimentary factors that are associated with both purpose and mindfulness, there are attributes of both that are not shared, for example: inherent in purpose is a broader motivational component driving the achievement of goals which support that purpose (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009); while inherent in mindfulness is nonjudgmental awareness of experiences in the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1990), as well as the possibility of insight into the true nature of existence (Olendzki, 2010). These characteristic differences between purpose and mindfulness can also be viewed as complimentary resources that may be supportive in the pursuit of dealing holistically with stress issues and burnout. In their discussion on the attributes of purpose, McKnight & Kashdan suggest that people with access to a large set of self-regulatory tools (like MBSR techniques, for example), with an ability to flexibly apply them, are in an optimal position to navigate the challenges of life and sustain high levels of healthy functioning (2009).
Mindfulness in relation to meditation

Mindfulness meditation does not aim to change us in any way, but rather helps us to be more unconditionally present with our current experience in the moment. This form of meditation is normally practised seated, although mindful awareness is not only reserved for sitting meditations, but also intended to be brought to all tasks and interactions throughout each day in order to integrate mindfulness into one’s life. Historically, mindfulness is a concept stemming from ancient Buddhist philosophy (Bhikkhu, 2010). Today it is most common through MBSR – an 8 week programme that teaches mindfulness meditation developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn to help people cope better and be more at ease in their life (C.R.U.K. n.d).

Since both resilience and self regulation have been shown to stem from purpose as well as mindfulness, which in turn arises from meditation, it appears as if meditation should be central in approaches to treating stress and burnout. It may be argued that mindfulness does not depend on meditation. Mindfulness can also arise from consciously selected perspectives that enable one to evaluate one’s identity with thoughts, emotions and sensations, and to experience them simply as cognitive events, however this approach requires self-knowledge, realizing larger patterns of meaning, and taking a wider view (Niemiec, Rashid, Spinella, 2012). Such a “metacognitive perspective” (Teasdale, 1999) makes it possible to see the aspects of any experience as temporary phenomena rather than creating an identity from them, but such an aptitude might be more difficult to achieve in challenging situations without it being embodied via regular meditation. Since meditation is an intrinsic part of MBSR, there is further evidence that using meditation helps to embed mindfulness so that it becomes the most reflexive and enduring state, especially in situations that might otherwise be overwhelmingly stressful. The stress reducing benefits of meditation coupled with establishing purpose in life suggests that the meditation approach to attaining mindfulness is especially well suited to stress and burnout treatment programmes.

Whether it be the practice of MBSR or traditional meditation in general, many people who could benefit from such a discipline are missing out on it for a variety of reasons that might include misunderstanding what meditation is, or failure to recognise the benefits, resulting in a lack of motivation to practice any form of meditation, or simply not enough time to learn meditation and practice it regularly. For such people the demystification of meditation’s stress reducing and improved coping benefits (Katz et al. 2005) to those who face stress and burnout might encourage such people to consider meditation as a worthwhile complimentary approach. What might further assist people to choose meditation could be awareness of effective meditation methods that are easy and practical to apply in the different contexts of life. An example of such an approach is the technique to bring about open awareness, which activates the body’s natural state of relaxation, while sharpening one’s sensory acuity, reducing self talk, as well as depotentiating fear and stress reactions (Hanson, 2011; Overdurf, 2013). Those who are familiar with the technique to facilitate open awareness report that it takes only a few minutes to learn, it can be applied in any place at any time of day, and the benefits of using it begin to take effect within a few seconds of applying the technique (reported by Transpersonal Coach course participants). On this basis it is hypothesised that open awareness may be of particular use to busy people who don’t have time to formally meditate, or those who are sceptical of Eastern practices, including those who might be at risk of being effected by stress or burnout. Furthermore, I have personally found that the establishment of open awareness serves as a
useful expediency to access deeper levels of meditation, and when brought to one’s tasks and interactions, it facilitates a mindful approach.

In conclusion, mindfulness, especially when integrated through forms of meditation appears to be a valuable aspect of programmes that intend to promote well-being. Evidence suggests that meditation and MBSR techniques promote a sense of purpose, the ability to self regulate and the enhancement of resilience — three interrelated aspects that have been shown to be constructive in the treatment of overwhelming stress and burnout. Niemiec, Rashid & Spinella, (2012) point out that the integration of mindfulness may well be a formula to cultivate productive engagement in work, an expanded sense of meaning and purpose, enhanced physical and psychological well-being, and improved relationships. The achievement of mindfulness may counteract the effect of stressors that can lead to burnout, thus mindfulness practices probably will contribute to the alleviation of burnout symptoms and possibly even play a significant role in burnout prevention.

My 2015 MSc research results suggest that OA:

- Increases mindful resilience to stress and burnout.
- Enhances performance (mental and physical) and promote flow.
- Cultivates a sense of interconnection, as well as:

References at end
Open Awareness for preventing and recovering from burnout

Burnout (mental, emotional, physical and spiritual fatigue) is generally considered to be caused by too much stress over an extended period where one loses hope in achieving a desired goal (Shirom, 1989).

The symptoms of burnout spill over into other areas of the affected person's life affecting their performance, motivation, personal relationships and social life, and can lead to depression, anxiety and psychosomatic disorders, as well as destructive behaviours toward self and others (Brühlmann, 2011; Cartwright & Cooper, 1996).

According to the NLP Communication Model, the way in which our minds have been conditioned to filter consciousness determines our personal experience of the world, including all our thoughts, feelings and behaviours. This phenomenon underlies why we are the way we are, influencing our health, relationships and finances, as well as our approach to stressful situations, including our potential for burnout. This article is the first in a series of articles on how to eliminate stress reactions from your life and how to avoid burnout, as well as recover from burnout.

The results of my MSc research project revealed that the causes of burnout might be related to an inhibited access to the more subtle levels of consciousness or constricted flow between levels of consciousness, which may in turn lead to what I refer to as “transpersonal burnout”. Stephen Wright (2010, p.8) describes this condition aptly as a form of deep human suffering at every level – physical, psychological, social, spiritual – which occurs when old ways of being in the world no longer work and start to disintegrate. Transpersonal burnout is soul sickness, a condition that I sometimes think of as being stuck in mental mud and clueless about any solution. This state is characterised by a narrowing of awareness that prevents one from experiencing one's authentic self and utilising one's inner resources. Different stages of this condition are experienced as anxiety, fear, overwhelm, frustration, and helplessness, – which can escalate to mental exhaustion, physical fatigue and emotional bankruptcy, including depression (Brühlmann, 2011; Shirom, 1989).

Transpersonal burnout (TpB) is triggered by stressful or intensely emotional experiences in our daily life, but the potential for it to be triggered most likely already exists in the unconscious awareness of such individuals. Furthermore, according to Stanislav Grof (2000), various emotional and psychosomatic disorders including TpB develop as a result of the reinforcing influence of traumatic events in our postnatal history, which in turn have roots in the perinatal, prenatal and transpersonal domains. If the seeds for potential TpB have been planted, the optimal fertile ground for TpB to manifest is often the perception of issues being unresolvable in valued relationships and/or a perceived loss of connection with one's intrinsic source of mental, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing. This kind of limiting perception, if triggered, can manifest into two different types of TpB, depending on the values of the individual.

The first type of TpB (TpB-1) can be identified in various contexts, for example, the placement of significant value in external goals, fuelling materialism and causing overexertion amongst competitors as well as peers for the prestige of an acclaimed title or other acquisitions. This hypothesis further associates TpB-1 with the large scale of dysfunctional relationships in society, from disharmony in the family, to personal relationship crises, and professional relationship stress, including the possibility of TpB-1 being an underlying factor in the breakdown of group relations and international conflict, all contributing to substance abuse, self harm, violence, power struggles, and segregation, for example (Dierendonck, Garssen & Visser, 2005). This condition is known to
be contagious in organisations, being transferred from one employee to another (cited in Gonzalez-Moralesa, G., et al. 2012) and it can spread from one area of a persons’ life to another infecting the people that one interacts with regularly (Brühlmann, 2011). Thomas Germaine (n.d) refers to David Bohm’s (1994) impression of a society as one that has lost its connection with the implicate order (the infinite Unconscious), behaving like a set of disjointed mechanical fragments, one of which is oneself — this is TpB-1 on a large scale.

The second type of transpersonal burnout (TpB-2) can be compared to what Stan Grof and Christina Grof refer to as “Spiritual Emergency” (1989), crises that emerge when the process of growth and change becomes chaotic and overwhelming. TpB-2 has also been compared to the dark night of the soul, which Eckhart Tolle (2011) refers to as a collapse of a perceived meaning in life. Wright refers to burnout as “a spiritual crisis on the way home” in the title of his 2010 book, with “home” being one’s state of spiritual well-being. TpB-2 is that stage of the dark night shortly before dawn through which the seeker of spiritual enlightenment must pass in order to wake up to the realisation that they are already “home”.

A common characteristic between those who suffer from TpB-1 and TpB-2 is that both are striving to achieve a goal that suddenly seems impossible, they become overwhelmed and they feel like they can’t go on in the same mode of operation, yet other modes are not conceivable or at least not favourable. Those experiencing TpB, regardless of the type, often loose touch with the initial source of inspiration that set them on their path, they become focussed on the doom and gloom of their crisis, and they loose hope. Steve Taylor (2013) refers to the point some people reach when the values and goals of a superficial and ordinary life don’t satisfy them anymore, when there is a yearning for something more, an impulse beneath the surface to find a more meaningful life, or to make contact with a deeper part of one’s own being. The incongruence between where one is and where one wants to be can surmount to intense personal suffering. I have found that those who don’t give up by resorting to external sources to temporarily alleviate their symptoms, eventually realise something of tremendous personal significance or learn something important about themselves, and as such the best way forward for these individuals is revealed sooner or later. Those who take a mindfulness approach seem to transition through their burnout phase more quickly and easily, additionally, those who have integrated mindfulness and meditation into their life appear to be less affected by burnout, or immune to it.

I have utilised Open Awareness over the past several years to help clients overcome both TpB-1 and TpB-2. The benefits of mindfulness in treating and preventing burnout is verified in Katz et al. (2005), who add that mindfulness approaches help to resolve old wounds and unresolved issues, thereby indicating how mindfulness can address the cause of stress and burnout. Several of my clients, who while being guided through a mindfulness based process were able to spontaneously recall distant memories that signified to these clients the root cause of their current issue. This confirms that the disposition for burnout to occur does often have causal links far back in the individual’s personal history, as Grof (2000) suggests in similar examples. Mindfulness based healing interventions were used to heal the root cause for these individuals, and mindfulness practices were used by these individuals in order to integrate and sustain the healing in their present life. In every case the technique to facilitate OA proved to be pivotal in the healing process, as it provided these clients with a simple skill to open the aperture of their awareness. In other words, they learnt how to have an enhanced internal awareness of the quality of their own thoughts and emotions, while simultaneously having an improved external sensory awareness, plus at the same time activating their body’s relaxation response and gaining a sense of interconnectivity with others. These aforementioned phenomena are associated with open awareness (Hanson, 2011; Overdurf, 2013) and prove to be a suitable mindfulness approach when dealing with both stress and burnout.
With OA known to induce an open, receptive and calm state of consciousness, once integrated as an automatic response to the challenges of life, one can expect to experience a new quality of life, or as suggested by Walsh and Vaughan (1980), a raised perception of reality.

A mindfulness based lifestyle has been suggested by Niemiec, Rashid & Spinella, (2012) to cultivate productive engagement in work, an expanded sense of meaning and purpose, enhanced physical and psychological well-being, and improved relationships. Don’t we all want that?

What makes you come truly Alive?

What gets you into The Flow?

What’s your next step toward being This Person?

Choose what makes you come Alive...

Every step of the way!

*The Burnout Self Diagnostic Tool*

References at end
Mindfulness, bodyfulness and open awareness

Mindfulness, bodyfulness and open awareness are 3 sides of the same coin. This article describes their commonalities and differences, as well as their applications in terms of personal growth and transpersonal development.

As new sicknesses arise and the world’s problems proliferate, it’s clear that new solutions are needed. Many of the significant problems the world faces today, whether personally,- environmentally,- socially,- economically,- and others are issues that stem (at least in part) from a lack of awareness of our multidimensional interrelatedness in the vast web of life. According to Albert Einstein, seeing ourselves as individual disconnected entities in the universe is an optical delusion of consciousness (Einstein, 1977). He recognised that in order to solve the problems that we experience on one level, we require expanded levels of perception. Tunnel awareness (a limited perception of oneself in relation to one’s surroundings) is a contributory cause of why we experience ourselves as separate form everyone and everything else in life, which in turn leads us to behave destructively toward ourselves, others and our environment. In this article I will point out how Open Awareness can broaden ones level of perception, leading from self-concept to Self realisation, and thus be of healing and transformative value to humans and our world.

Tunnel awareness can be understood as a narrowed focus of attention that deletes everything in the periphery of one’s field of awareness from ones personal consciousness. The fight and flight response is associated with being in tunnel awareness, as in this state one usually identifies only the perceived danger while deleting whatever else is not necessary in our field of awareness in order to survive a life threatening situation. One may behave similarly in situations that are not threatening to one’s life, but considered by the individual to be unpleasant or disturbing, where one remains fixated on the object of negative reference while all other points of reference, including the quality of one’s own thoughts and feelings are negated (Drummond, D. n.d). Those who experience overwhelming stress or the burnout syndrome are usually stuck in a form of tunnel awareness, whereby that which perpetuates the problem is what one’s attention remains focussed on, thus the problem remains a problem. Satisfying solutions might only be discovered when the individual succeeds in shifting their state of consciousness in a way that enables them to dis-identify from their limited self-concept. This could be facilitated through expanding the sense of self and establishing a broader perspective, which in turn may increase one’s awareness of choices beyond those that are determined through identification with the limited self-concept.

Each state of consciousness offers a different view of reality, thus one’s perception of reality is only partially true, therefore one’s state of consciousness determines one’s current model of the world (Walsh & Vaughn, 1980). On this basis, expanding one’s experience of self in a manner that includes shifting one’s state of consciousness into a calm and receptive mode – not only enables one to see the bigger picture, but also experience oneself differently in relation to one’s environment and the circumstances that are associated with it. Hunt (2007) considers transformation to be possible through a more complete letting go of the ordinary boundaries of self in order to reveal the more subtle levels of the Unconscious. Open awareness enables one to release identification with the self-concept and become aware of the more subtle levels of consciousness that are normally beyond our level of perception. In discussing his own model of self-expansiveness, Harris Friedman (2013) explains:
Self-expansiveness rests on the view that the self-concept can be relatively narrowly construed, limited to the isolated individual bound in the here-and-now of the present, or can expand to include others, nature, and even a transpersonally constituted identity where the sense of self can extend to allow for boundless identity with all of nature (p. 204).

Friedman suggests that transpersonal self-expansiveness and its cartography unifies all perspectives of the self-concept within a single holistic framework (Ibid p. 207). In terms of transpersonal healing and growth Friedman points out that beyond the framework of his construct, another self expanding strategy might be “dis-identification”, provided it is not taken to extremes (Ibid p.213). The process of open awareness focusses primarily on enabling individuals to dis-identify form their self-concept through facilitating an expanded sense of self that transcends one’s direct experience of space. More specifically, open awareness assists one to identify all sensory experiences within one’s field of awareness, as opposed to these being experienced outside or separate from them. Those whom I have guided to experience the expanded state induced through the practice of open awareness often report that the boundaries between self and not self seem to dissolve, bringing about a sense that all experiences unfold within the Self (a felt sense of oneness with everything in awareness). Feelings of being interconnected with all things are common when practising peripheral awareness in the same way consciousness researchers have described the effects of other transpersonal practices (e.g. Fadiman, Grob, Griffiths, Nichols, C., Nichols, D., et al., 2009) and thus identification with the self-concept is replaced (although sometimes only temporarily) with a more encompassing and seemingly infinite experience of Self. The process ends by embodying the expanded state (feeling it in the physical form) and then choosing how to approach challenging situations from the point of view of the Self (or while the individual is experiencing a holotropic state of consciousness (Stanislav Grof’s term for “moving toward wholeness” (2000). Depending on the individual and their reason for practising open awareness, the experience of Self fluctuates and is therefore not an ultimate state, but rather one in which the individual experiences a felt sense of expansiveness and interconnection resulting from dis-identification from a limiting self-concept.

Open awareness in relation to mindfulness and bodyfulness

While until now empirical evidence for the value of open awareness remains mostly reserved for those who undertake the practice, scientific data does at least validate the calm and relaxed state of well-being due to parasympathetic nervous system activation that the skill stimulates (e.g. Hanson, 2011 and Farb, et al. 2007). Both open awareness and mindfulness (the way in which it is most commonly known in the West) involve establishing present moment awareness and being non-judgemental. There is however one fundamental difference in the two practices that I will outline here.

Some Westernised mindfulness practices deliberately bring intentionality to the present moment, for example: watching thoughts, abstaining from judgments, accepting feelings, etc. With open awareness, the only intention is to open the aperture of one’s awareness. This kind of opening of one’s field of awareness naturally in and of itself calms the mind, enhances one’s sensory acuity and cultivates a sense that all things (in one’s present experience) are constantly unfolding and interlinked processes within one’s awareness, where the boundaries between subject and object seem to dissolve. This leads to a sense of interconnection with others (which results in compassion) and the world ‘around’ us (which seems more within us at this stage). One feels expanded, peaceful and there is little self talk or none at all. Any self talk that may be judgemental can be quite easily
heard as the voice of one’s self-concept (or ego) from which one has dis-identified, thus it has no significant influence.

Many practitioners would likely agree that the objective of performance enhancing skills, as well as plenty types of meditation and spiritual practices is to embody them, so that they become one’s automatic response in the relevant contexts of life. Bodyfulness (Ferrer, 2008) is when no trace of conscious intention is present, yet the individual reflexively responds to experiences in a mindful, compassionate and wise manner. Practitioners of open awareness have found that it has more of a being nature to it with little intentionality, while mindfulness practice (in the common Western approach) has a slightly more doing nature to it, with more intentionality. On this basis open awareness leads to bodyfulness with relative ease through practice and sooner or later (depending on the individual) almost no intention is required in order for open awareness to become embodied and therefore an enduring state. Open awareness is not being advocated as superior to mindfulness, but rather as a helpful approach to achieve mindfulness and to more easily embody a mindful approach to life in general.

The experience of activating transpersonal states and perspectives such as open awareness, as outlined above, suggests that one’s sense of self (self-concept) can become expanded to be more inclusive of phenomena that might ordinarily be unconscious or experienced as separate from oneself. Additionally, a mindful orientation is also being associated with open awareness, and as such, applications of this approach can be useful in the context of transpersonal coaching.

References at end
Last words...

A certainty about uncertainty

“We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations.”
Charles Swindoll

Generally, if you know exactly what lies ahead of you then you may tend to think and behave in set ways (tunnel awareness) - which may in turn limit your perception, spontaneity and creativity. If you don’t know what lies ahead, then to the extent that you can remain comfortable with uncertainty, you will be more able to flow with the natural unfolding of life’s purpose for you. New possibilities and creative thinking emerge from the field of uncertainty. OA makes it easier!

In this day and age, what’s there to be certain about anyway? These are times of rapid change and transformation – very frightening for those who insist on knowing what tomorrow will bring - and so it will remain until we learn to become familiar with the unknown and in so doing tap our creative ability to mould and shape our destinies more fluidly. Stress and anxiety arises when what we think we need is threatened by the possibility that we might not get it or lose it. A sense of freedom, inner peace and resourcefulness is the experience of those who are able to embrace the fact that every experience is a changing one.

Many people experience personal breakthroughs the moment they give up trying to have things a certain way. This is not giving in to a situation, it’s the realization that we don’t need to have all the answers and we don’t have to try to control how things turn out, and that’s okay. This moment of acceptance leads to new perceptions and possibilities arising in awareness that had previously been blocked by rigid thinking.

Sometimes we need to get out of our own way so that we can see where we are and where we’re going more clearly. For this OA is most useful.

The next time you face uncertainty, if you want to move through it more quickly and gracefully, then try approaching your situation as follows:

Realize that in the context of your whole life, what you know is always going to be a tiny island in the infinite ocean of what you don’t know. It’s from what you don’t know that innovative ideas, opportunities and solutions to problems arise. Therefore, allow yourself to feel the feelings associated with not knowing, as this is how you embrace uncertainty. Giving yourself permission to feel those feelings is how you release them from your body and free your mind to identify the best way forward.

I’m not suggesting that you stop planning and organizing things in your life. However, I want to bring your awareness to the fact that no matter what your experience is, it’s always a passing one, and therefore you never have to feel stuck or helpless. Embracing uncertainty means embracing life, and in so doing becoming more agile and experiencing more aliveness.

Whatever causes you dis-ease... Open the aperture of your awareness and embrace it!
References


© authentic-self-empowerment.com


Hölzel, B.K., 2 , Lazar, S.W., 2 , Gard, T. 1 , 2 , Schuman-Oliver, Z., 2 , Vago, D.R., 3 , Ott1, U. (2011). 1. Bender Institute of Neuroimaging, Justus Liebig-University, Giessen, Germany; 2. Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA; 3. Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA


Overdurf, J. (personal communication, June 20, 2013) http://www.johnoverdurf.com


Schmitz, H., Müllan, R., & Slaby, J. (2011). Emotions outside the box—the new phenomenology of feeling and corporeality, Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences, 10(2), pp.241-259. Segal, Z.,


taylor, S. Personal communication, June 27, 2013 (2011).


About the author - Jevon Dängeli

No matter what you think you are, You are more than that! Me too...

I’m an adventure seeking and curious person who finds people and life amazing! I enjoy spending time in nature with my family and friends. Human behaviour intrigues me, especially what differentiates us as people. However, it’s what connects and unifies all of us as human beings that most fascinates me.

I’ve had an interest in what motivates human behaviour for as long as I can remember. My desire to help people lead a purposeful life was catapulted when I survived an armed robbery at age 25. The perpetrator deliberately shot at me at close range and the bullet narrowly missed my head. This near-death experience became a defining moment for me. I felt spared for a reason and after intense soul searching the reason became clear: *Make every moment of your life count, not because you never know when it may be over, but because every experience counts for something valuable!*

I’m the author of 8 training manuals relating to Open Awareness (OA) and Authentic Self Empowerment (ASE), including *The User Manual for Your Mind*. I’ve recorded over 30 audio-programmes and a comprehensive video training series that include OA and ASE methodologies.

In 1998 I began studying a variety of alternative healing methods, travelling extensively to learn from leaders in this field. Since then I’ve been passionately involved in helping people overcome their physical, emotional, relationship and spiritual challenges. I’ve been providing holistic NLP, coaching and hypnotherapy certification training around Europe, the UK and South Africa since 2004. ASE, as a stand-alone methodology was established in 2007. Since then I’ve been using ASE methods in every session with my clients as it has proven to be the most effective set of skills in my coaching, therapy and training repertoire.

In order to develop a specialized ASE treatment for excessive stress and burnout I did research in this area as part of my MSc degree in ‘Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology’. Although many years of training and experience continue contributing to the development of ASE, it was during a series of unignorable revelations that appeared during meditation where the initial ideas and motivation to create ASE were inspired. I was given a mission! Now, through studying, using and teaching ASE I’m able to fulfil this mission – helping people discover their true value, while being a proactive part of the Whole to which we all want to belong.

ASE, with OA at its core, has given rise to the development of the Transpersonal Coaching Model which I teach in live and online transpersonal coaching courses (MSc & PG Cert.), that have obtained university accreditation and approval of various international psychology associations.

Independent OA training is now available at various locations around the world and online.
For many years I played with the idea of combining my 40 years of judo experience with my 20 years of psychology exploration and my passion to help children grow into happy, healthy and authentic adults. Finally, “jumi” (judo mind training) was born in 2017 out of the marriage of judo and mind, based on the vision of joyful children in a harmonious society. The core objective of jumi is to help children develop open awareness and the ability to maintain it in all types of situations.

Remember: “When you change your internal map of reality, you change your external experience of reality too. And when you change your experience of reality, the world changes. That’s how valuable you are!”